

# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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## IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Immunization Recommended to Control Whooping Cough

**San Bernardino.** The current epidemic levels of pertussis (whooping cough) in California have prompted public health officials to remind San Bernardino County residents about the importance of getting vaccinated. The rising number of pertussis cases in the state this year, may make this the worst outbreak of the disease in over 50 years.

"The best way to prevent pertussis is to get vaccinated," said Dr. Maxwell Ohikhuare, San Bernardino County Health Officer. He emphasized that the adolescent-adult pertussis booster vaccine (Tdap), is now recommended for the following individuals:

- Anyone 7 years and older who is not fully immunized, including those who are more than 64 years old,
- Women of childbearing age, before, during, or immediately after pregnancy, and
- Other people who have contact with pregnant women or infants.

"Immunity from pertussis vaccine or disease wears off, so most adults are susceptible to pertussis and should get immunized to protect themselves and their families," said Ohikhuare. Infants are especially vulnerable if they are not immunized or incompletely immunized. Infants under the age of 12 months have more serious illness from pertussis, and they are more likely to have complications and be hospitalized than persons in other age groups.

There were 1,496 cases of pertussis recorded in California in the first six months of this year. San Bernardino County has had 17 confirmed cases and 1 death since January. There were 16 pertussis cases in the County in 2009.

The pertussis vaccine is safe for children and adults. Infants can get the first pertussis vaccination at 2 months of age, but they aren't adequately protected until the series of three shots is complete at 6 months of age. It's preferable for pregnant women to be vaccinated after the first 12 weeks gestation.

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Parents can also help protect very young infants by reducing contact with persons who have cold symptoms or cough illness. Pertussis is a bacterial illness spread through the air from person-to-person, through close contact with droplets released when someone coughs or sneezes. The illness starts with cold-like symptoms that get more severe after one-to-two weeks. Rapid coughing fits follow, that may have a whooping sound, lasting 6 to 10 weeks.

Adults are urged to contact their health care provider for information about the booster vaccine that is best for them, and to get immunized. Immunizations are a routine benefit covered by most health insurance plans.

San Bernardino County Department of Public Health will provide pertussis vaccine in all its clinics. For clinic locations and schedules call 1 (800) 782-4264, or visit the website at [www.sbcounty.gov/dph](http://www.sbcounty.gov/dph).

For more facts about pertussis and vaccine guidance, visit the California Department of Public Health website at <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Pertussis.aspx>, or the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/pertussis/default.htm>.

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